L. Di Paola: Viaggi, trasporti e istituzioni. Studi sul cursus publicus. Pp. 163. Messina: Di. Sc. A. M., 1999, ISBN: 88-8268-099-1.

Kolb, Anne

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recognized, but at first sight this seems a less obvious question to ask about the literally down-to-earth Romans; but in fact, a people that called the Mediterranean its own could not avoid encountering islands and thinking about them, a process that left traces in Roman literature.

B. starts with the basic definition of islands, which includes ancient etymology. 'Insulae dictae quod in salo sint' (Isid. *Orig*. 14.6.1) is the epigraph for the first chapter, and the image dominates much of the book. The second chapter explores boundaries of islands, namely different meanings of an island's coastline, but also more abstract matters of definition, such as the ill-defined difference between island and peninsula. The idea that islands, unlike continents, have clearly defined boundaries leads on to the next chapters that consider islands within descriptions of the wider world and the mythical geography of 'the blessed islands'. Thoughts on the formation of islands are at the centre of B.'s next chapter: again he leads the reader from ancient (and modern) observations of natural phenomena to more abstract interpretation, such as thoughts on the life cycle of islands.

The study proceeds with three important aspects of the ancient island image that will inform the rest of the book: the island as stronghold, refuge, and hide-out, and, a rather disparate group that culminates in a parallel between islands and ships, vagrant islands. The next chapters explore islands as places of imprisonment, with a special focus on Corsica, where Seneca was exiled. The book ends with Christian attitudes towards islands: places of refuge and desert islands only fit for prisoners become places of grace where monastic communities or eremites settle. Christian writers exploited the symbolic value of islands, and B. shows how in their texts a long tradition of insular symbolism mingles with new ideas which are influenced by the new Christian use of islands as well as thoughts derived from the biblical tradition.

This book is enjoyable and B. is not only able to make his reader follow the ancient authors through a wealth of sometimes conflicting ideas, he also opens up many avenues for further thought. After the chapters in which islands had mainly been dealt with as in the sea, it came as a surprise that later chapters were often focusing on 'inland' islands—floating islands in lakes, fortresses in rivers, and the like. This illustrates the difficulties with the definition of the term island; the question remains: what is an island, what is insular, and what invites comparisons with islands?

One aspect of insularity that remains in the background is the fact that islands were in fact often hubs of communication—just the opposite of the inaccessible places so prominent in B.'s study. Is this due to the ancient sources or did widely held scholarly views (see P. Horden, N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* [Oxford, 2000]) influence the choice of themes discussed? As it is, the story of the exile on Cercina who has his stake in the trade between Africa and Italy (p. 146, Tac. *Ann*. 4.13.3) seems strangely out of place. The rôle of islands as, and within, provinces may also have deserved further study: the thought appears in the introduction but is never followed up. The greatest weakness of this book is its poor presentation, especially where quotes in foreign languages (mostly Latin and French) are inserted in the text without anything to set them apart. B. also leaves us without a bibliography: all references are given in full in the notes following each chapter. There is an index of modern authors' names: this makes the lack of a 'proper' index even more obvious and it is definitely not sufficient as a bibliography.

All these points, however, should not diminish the merit of this work: B.'s study offers an interesting and refreshing way of looking at Roman literature, and the range of texts it includes is impressive. It is noteworthy that B. continues where many studies would stop: his treatment of Christian texts illustrates continuity and change in an interesting way, especially because he can show connections with much of the material discussed before. In this way he presents a pleasantly rounded picture of what some Romans thought of islands.

St John's College, Oxford MARIA PRETZLER

L. Di Paola: *Viaggi, trasporti e istituzioni. Studi sul cursus publicus.* Pp. 163. Messina: Di. Sc. A. M., 1999. Paper, L. 48,000. ISBN: 88-8268-099-1.

This short work studies particular issues helpful for understanding the relation between the *cursus publicus* and power (pp. 19f.). A full outline of the history and organization of the *cursus publicus* is not intended. D. defines (p. 15) the *cursus publicus* as a state system for land transport (although several sources show the use of ships), which combines postal and transport services. This reflects a traditional view of the *cursus publicus*, recently revised as the Roman state's

infrastructure for communication, travel, and specific transport measures (see my *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich* [Berlin, 2000], pp. 49–226). In seven chapters D. concentrates on late antiquity. Only at the beginning (Chapter I) and the end (Chapter VII) is the early Empire briefly considered.

Chapter I describes Augustus' creation of the system, the terminology for which is not as clear as D. claims; of the five sources adduced, only two date from the early Empire, and one—Suet. *Aug*. 49.3—does not give the stated terms at all. (Unfortunately it is not only here that the use of sources and literature lacks careful consideration.) With good reason, D. points out the relation between the two main sources (Suet. *Aug*. 49.3, *SEG* 26.1392) which both show a system of *vehicula* provided along the roads. The problems which arise from this view, especially with regard to the inscription, are not mentioned; only the discussion in the excellent epigraphic edition by Mitchell (*JRS* 66 [1976], 106–31) gives adequate reasons for this thesis and could lead to further conclusions. Chapter II provides the relevant sources for the use of the *cursus publicus* by clerics, who were often, especially for their ecclesiastical synods, entitled to use it. D. concludes that the emperor wished to treat them and officials equally. But the bare right to use the *cursus publicus* hardly proves such an evolution, although D. correctly points out that this right was a privilege. Yet it was granted not only to officials (who were of course the largest group of users of this state institution), but also to private persons. Only the emperor could entitle a person to use it. Chapter III aims at illustrating the organization of the *cursus publicus*. Legal texts prescribe the duties of the population (*munera*) in maintaining the system during the fourth and fifth centuries, e.g. service as head of station for rest and change of animals (*praepositus mansionis*), provision of horses (*veredi*), and of additionally required horses (*paraveredi*). It follows that the population bore the brunt of the system. D. mainly agrees with the current state of research, but further questions arise: for example, are there really 'stazioni postali' during the late republic and the principate (D. [p. 44] seems to misunderstand P. Stoffel, *Über die Staatspost, die Ochsengespanne und die requirierten Ochsengespanne* [Bern, 1994], p. 18, who adduces sources for *manceps* in road building)? Do we have to believe Procopius' claim that there were forty horses per station? Is it useful to calculate the need for animals from this? What about the other animals of the *cursus publicus?* Do they count in addition? Chapter IV deals with aspects of the authorization of the use of the *cursus publicus*. The topics mentioned—the contents of an *evectio*, the right to issue the warrants for the *cursus publicus*, the travellers—represent the standard results of research. Chapter V collects sources for the *cursus publicus* in Sicily and Africa, and shows up interesting points of the economic situation, but the sporadic sources cannot produce an overall picture. Chapter VI lists the references to the *cursus publicus* in Philostratus, Libanius, and Cassiodorus. D.'s account of the latter shows the survival of the *cursus publicus* in the Gothic kingdom, and provides very useful information (although questions of organization are left unanswered). Chapter VII presents coins with general links to transport (only the well-known edition of Nerva referring to the *cursus publicus*), and assumes a privileged state of logistical aspects, as well as the political and economic relevance of some imperial measures shown in the coins.

D. points up relevant issues of the *cursus publicus*; however, some aspects need further discussion.

University of Zurich ANNE KOLB

P. SALMON: *La limitation des naissances dans la société romaine.* (Collection Latomus 250.) Pp. 101. Brussels: Latomus, Revue d'Études Latines, 1999. Paper, frs 100. ISBN: 2-87031-191-5.

Salmon's unstated aim is apparently to provide French-speaking readers with an introduction to the issues of contraception, abortion, infanticide, infant exposure, and voluntary continence in the Roman world; these topics form the themes of the chapters. As a leading scholar on Roman population, he is eminently qualified, and the basic problems and the main sources are set out clearly. However, the progress made in ancient demographic and gender studies over the last 20 years will not be immediately obvious to readers who are introduced to Roman family planning here.

S. accepts that medically induced sterility was widespread, but says little about why. J. M. Riddle's *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 1992) appears in the bibliography, but in only one footnote. There is a brief reference to earlier work on the same theme by M.-Th. Fontanille, but no indication that the effectiveness of